

## Vulnerable Groups

### Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment

Revised: 2014

#### Introduction

The [Department for Work and Pensions](#) state that the definition of disability is if a person is disabled or has a physical or mental impairment that has an effect on the persons' ability to do normal daily activities. These include sensory impairment, fluctuating, progressive or degenerative conditions. The [Department for Work and Pensions](#) estimate that over 11 million people in Great Britain have a limiting long term illness, impairment including sensory loss and a disability. There continues to be forecasted figures of a significant increase in the number of people living with long term conditions and disability which in turn will continue to challenge the current work already being provided to ensure safe and effective services.

#### What do we know?

The prevalence of disability rises with age. Some 6% of children are disabled compared to 16% of working age adults and 45% of adults over 65 in Britain ([Department for Work and Pensions, 2010](#)).

Macular Disease is the most common cause of visual impairment in the developed world and is most prevalent in people aged 60 and over. Whilst currently one in seven people in UK are deaf or hard of hearing ([Action on Hearing Loss, 2013](#)).

#### Adults with physical disabilities

There are 7,625 people in West Berkshire aged between 18 and 64 who are estimated to have a moderate physical disability and 2,297 estimated to have a severe disability in 2011. These are based on projections from the [Health Survey for England 2001](#). The number of people with a moderate or severe disability is expected to increase by 10% and 12% respectively by 2030. The total increases across West Berkshire are higher than the national and regional averages.

#### People who are blind or partially sighted

The [Royal National Institute for the Blind \(RNIB\)](#) estimates that 0.5% of the population is blind and 0.8% is partially sighted. If these rates are applied to the estimated population of West Berkshire LA, it would suggest that there were 770 blind people and 1,232 partially sighted people living in West Berkshire LA eligible for statutory registration.

As the Council's statutory returns show a discrepancy of 1,407 between those registered blind and the estimated numbers of people who are blind or partially sighted, there may be people with a visual impairment within West Berkshire LA that are not included on the register and whose needs could be unmet.

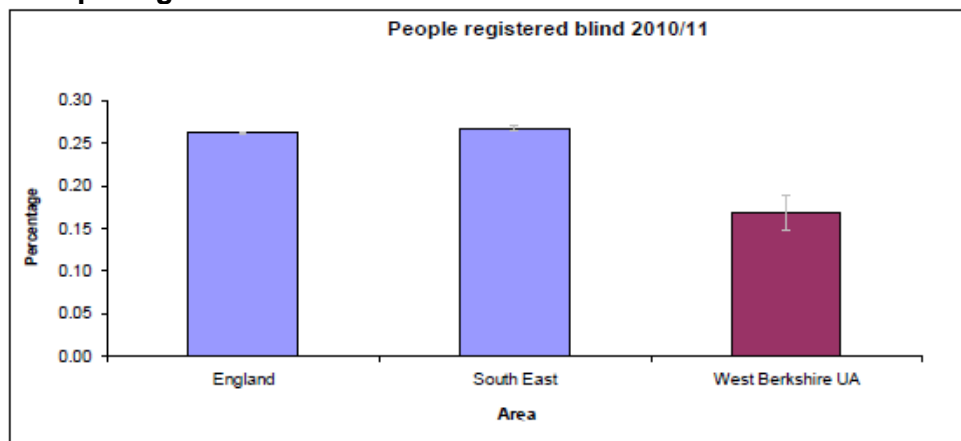
The RNIB estimates that 60% of people who are blind or partially sighted are aged over 75 years of age. 67% of people registered blind and 96% of those registered partially sighted in West Berkshire LA are aged 75 and over.

### People who are deaf or hard of hearing

Bearing in mind that registration is a voluntary process, often with no perceived benefits to those within the deaf community, 65 people in West Berkshire LA are registered deaf and a further 290 people are registered as hard of hearing. 66% of people registered as deaf in West Berkshire LA are aged 18 to 64. 68% of those registered as hard of hearing in West Berkshire LA are aged 65 and over. The number of people registered as deaf or hard of hearing in West Berkshire LA is fewer than the national or regional averages.

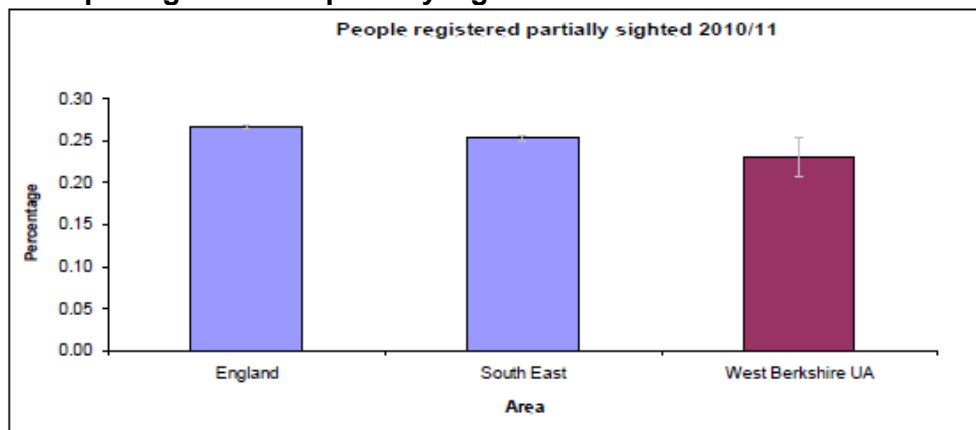
Figures 1 to 3 shows the number of people registered as blind, partially blind, deaf, or hard of hearing as a proportion of the total population.

**Figure 1: People registered as blind in 2010/11**



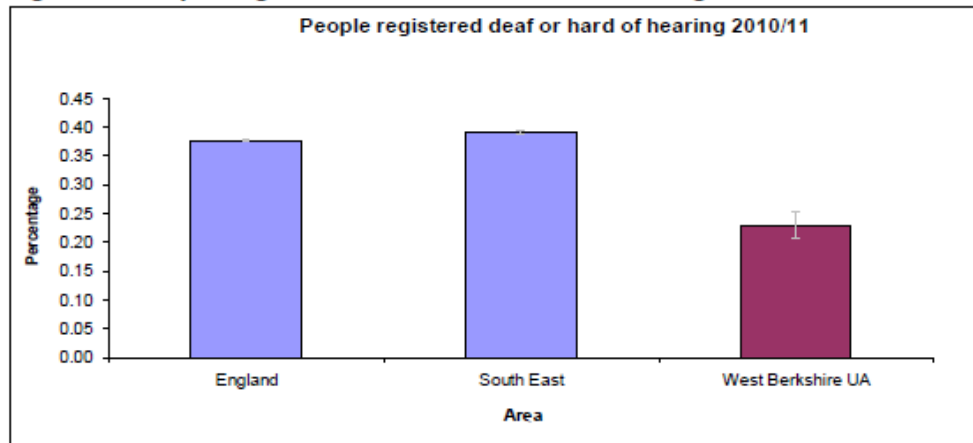
Source: [Health and Social Care Information Centre](#)

**Figure 2: People registered as partially sighted in 2010/11**



Source: [Health and Social Care Information Centre](#)

**Figure 3: People registered as deaf or hard of hearing in 2010/11**



Source: [Health and Social Care Information Centre](#)

The data above shows that fewer people in West Berkshire are registered as having a sensory impairment when compared to the National and South East Region averages. However, the data illustrates the average percentage of those registered blind, deaf and hard of hearing people is higher than the national average.

The [Projecting Adult Needs and Services Information \(PANSI\)](#) uses National Statistics population projections to estimate how many people aged 18 to 64 will have a visual or hearing impairment from 2012 to 2020. Approximately 4,011 adults in West Berkshire are estimated to have moderate or severe hearing impairment in 2014 with 35 estimated to have a profound hearing impairment. These figures are expected to rise to around 280 and 4 by 2020. 62 adults are estimated to have a serious visual impairment by 2016.

[Projecting Adult Needs and Services Information \(PANSI\)](#) also projects how many people aged 18 to 64 will have a physical disability from 2012 to 2020. Around 7,701 people in West Berkshire are estimated to have a moderate physical disability in 2014 with 2,317 estimated to have a serious physical disability. These figures are expected to rise to 2,461 by 2020.

### **What is the data telling us?**

#### **What are the key inequalities?**

According to the [Family Resources Survey 2010/11](#), a high proportion of individuals who live in families with disabled members live in poverty when compared to individuals who live in families where no one is disabled. According to the [Department of Communities and Local Government \(2008\)](#), the gap in non-decent housing has narrowed over recent years and one in three households with a disabled person still live in non-decent accommodation today.

#### **What are the unmet needs/ service gaps?**

According to the Department for Work and Pensions [Family Survey 2010/11](#), over a quarter of disabled people explain that they do not have control over their daily lives. The opinions of those who are disabled have also highlighted that issues surrounding access to employment, support, and appropriate housing remains an unmet priority and lack of choice.

One in 10 adults in the UK would benefit from wearing hearing aids and yet one in 30 people actually do. [Action on Hearing Loss](#) is a registered charity in the UK focused on fulfilling their strategy for people to acknowledge their hearing loss and take action. In addition, Action on Hearing Loss provides comprehensive support and awareness campaigns to those people with hearing loss.

### **Recommendations for consideration**

- Greater access to suitable housing and direct support with education and childcare to enable people with long-term conditions to gain or return to employment.
- An expansion of integrated working should greatly benefit people with long-term conditions, disabilities and those living with sensory loss.
- Joint personal health and social care budgets should support people to have greater choice and control.

### **National and local strategies**

The [Disability Discrimination Act 2005](#) and the Cabinet Office publication [Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People](#) are the national policies and guidance documents for services to improve people's lives that have a disability. The Personalisation agenda and [Putting People First](#) sets out to achieve equality for individuals who have a disability and set outcome measures to those who are non-disabled. The personalisation agenda will support people to be independent by maximising opportunities and improving access to a wider range of services i.e. employment.

The expectations for visual impairment services across health and social care are detailed in the [Vision 2020 National Eye Care Strategy](#). This strategy seeks to improve the nation's eye health services by uniting interested initiatives to promote awareness and take action on issues relating to vision. The objectives of UK Vision Strategy are a reflection of the World Health Organisation's action plan on [the rights for children and persons with disabilities](#).

The Department of Health's Guidance on [Social Care for Deafblind Children and Adults](#) details the duties of services to people who have sensory impairment. The policy and legislation under the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 requires specific actions to be taken in identifying Deafblind people and keeping up to date records of those people within the Local Authorities catchment areas.

The [National Service Framework for Long-term Conditions](#) was published in 2005 by the Department of Health. The document sets out quality requirements to transform the way health and social care services support people with long term neurological conditions to live as independently as possible. The main points from the framework are that:

- Those with long-term conditions will be supported to stay as well as possible.
- Those with long-term conditions will be as independent as possible and in control of their lives (up to and including the end of life).

- Services will be merged with a focus on individuals' biological, psychological and social needs.
- People will be supported to stay healthy and avoid developing long term conditions.
- People will have their conditions diagnosed early and quickly.
- People with long term conditions will be socially included and succeeding in work and education.

The [Association of Directors of Adult Social Services \(ADASS\)](#) state that due to the increasing number of older people with sensory needs, it is expected that the visual impairment rehabilitation service will be in high demand. The ADASS advises local authorities to consider securing specialist qualified rehabilitation and assessment provision whether in-house, or contracted through a third party, to ensure that people with sight loss in the area are able to maximise their independence.

The [Sensory Consortium Service](#) is a specialist teaching and support service for children aged 0-19 years who have a hearing, visual or multi-sensory impairment. The service operates within the 6 authorities in Berkshire and aims to raise the standards and achievement for all children, particularly those with sensory impairment. All teachers are highly qualified specialists and children are referred onto the service quickly.

There are specialist services in West Berkshire for Children and Adults with specialist needs. The Deaf Services Team provides social care services to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing children and adults living in West Berkshire. Within the community/sensory needs team, there is also trained staff and specialist workers dedicating to helping those who are visually impaired and can help advise people on issues relating to visual impairment and living with slight problems.

### **Other chapters you might be interested in**

Social Care/Personalisation  
Carers  
Housing and Deprivation

If you have any questions about this chapter, please contact Public Health and Wellbeing Team on [publichealthandwellbeing@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:publichealthandwellbeing@westberks.gov.uk) or 01635 503437